



ELSAH HISTORY

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THE CASE OF THE CLOBBERED COOPER By Leslie Yelland

In 1887 Elsah, Illinois was a small, enterprising river town, but one of the quietest in the area. Unlike Grafton, with its hundreds of quarry workers, numerous taverns, and history of roughness and violence, Elsah was mostly a family town. Trouble, when it came, usually appeared as petty thievery or vandalism, or else was caused by those migrant farm workers who used the river for travel and came up through town on their way to work in the fields of Jersey County.

This year saw the building of a new road to Alton, now the Beltrees Road. It also saw a lot of Elsah energy put into the brand new Piasa Assembly Grounds, soon to become the Great Western Chautauqua, a mile up the river. And Elsah's Village Hall on LaSalle Street, at that time Main Street, was finally built on a lot bought from the Odd Fellows at the foot of Palm Street.

At this time Elsah's first railroad was five years old. This spur line, the shoe-fly, connected Grafton with the main line at Dow, running the length of Elsah Hollow on the shoulder of the east hill.

Enos Doron's flour mill was in operation, though not prospering, and Frank Hansell's commission merchant's business still shipped considerable farm produce on the Spread Eagle and other riverboats. Cosmos Keller's repapering of his tavern, now the Riverview House, or William Tonkinson's renting of a blacksmith shop, on the east side of Mill Street below Maple (now gone), were news enough to get into the Elsah column of the Jersey County Democrat.

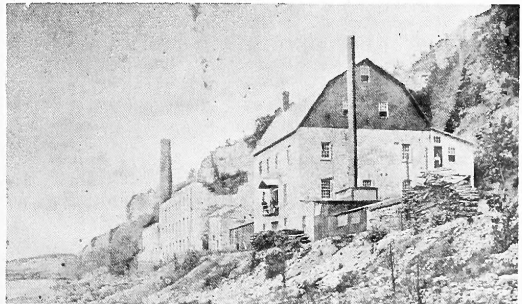
Into the middle of this bucolic country scene dropped a stunning event early in the fall of the year, involving four of Elsah's people in a turmoil that was for a time the talk of the county. Xavier Schneider, "a resident of Elsah, and one of the most respected citizens of that village" was the first. He was a cooper by trade, and a member of the Odd Fellows. Thomas Piggott was twenty years old -- his father was Isaac Piggott, surely a well-known name around the village of Elsah. Local people knew Tom Piggott, as in those days everyone knew everyone else. He worked for the St. Louis-Alton-Springfield railroad company. Harry Minard was eighteen years old, had lived in Elsah all his life. Most of his jobs were not steady ones -- he worked for Mrs. Lucy V. Semple Ames, who lived at her estate at Notchcliff, when his father was unable to; he worked for the Wards, who ran a cider mill on the present site of the Christian Science church, at LaSalle Street and Selma Square, when one of their regular men couldn't work. James Besterfeldt was a regular

worker at the Wards'. He was often mistaken for another man in the village, David Reeder, because of the resemblance in their features. Besterfeldt had a full beard and moustache.

The four men described don't seem to have much in common. Somehow they apparently all got together on September 29, 1887. Schneider got the worst of the deal -- he was hit several times, robbed and left for dead on the sidewalk across the street from the Wards' residence on Mill Street, northeast of the schoolhouse. Figgott ended up with the money -- all \$461.65 of it, which he later stashed in his trunk. Life went on for the four men, but the course of their lives had changed drastically.

The Jersey County Democrat published the following a little more than two weeks after the crime was committed:

For a number of years petty thieving has been going on in our town, and although the guilty parties have been caught several times the affairs have been kept quiet on account of families or friends, or lodge influences. In this way our village has acquired a reputation abroad that is not an envied one. From petty thieving it grew to house breaking. Giberson's store was robbed of small amounts several times



The Elsah waterfront, showing the ruined distillery and the flour mill, much as it looked on the fateful night when Schneider was paid \$354.50 at the mill for cooperage work.

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the robbers forcing a door. The Elsay flouring mill was also robbed of small amounts several times the parties forcing a window. . . Two attempts were made to wreck the evening passenger train and still the good people did not attempt to ferret out the guilty parties. But on the evening of September 29th a crime was committed that thoroughly aroused the good people of our village and a united set of citizens went to work with a new determination that no stone should be left unturned to find the criminals and no guilty man should escape.

A reward of \$300 was offered "for the arrest and conviction of the party or parties committing the act, by the Village of Elsay, the Full Moon Lodge, 331, A. F. & A. M., and Elsay Lodge, 269, I.O.O.F." The minutes of the Elsay town meeting of October 4, 1887 show that it was voted that \$100 should be offered as part of the reward. There is no record of the money ever being paid, but on April 5, 1888, the following entry appeared: "Absolem Worthy moved that Thomas Hansell be paid \$100 out of the Special Tax assessed and collected for the payment of a reward offered by the Village Board of Trustees for the arrest and conviction of the parties that Waylaid and Robbed X. Schneider. Seconded by A.H. Stephany and carried."

At the October 1, 1887 meeting of the I.O.O.F. "it was moved and seconded that this Lodge offer a reward of one Hundred Dollars for the apprehension and conviction of the party or parties who assaulted and robbed Bro. Schneider on the night of Sept. 29th. Carried unanimously." Again, there is no record that this money was ever paid.

A month later the citizens of Elsay were still trying to get the truth about this crime, and thus it was still foremost in their thoughts. The Jersey County Democrat of October 20, 1887 "sold at Elsay for fifty cents each . . . The Post Dispatch says 'a good paper is known by the manner in which it writes up important local happenings' and the Democrat was the only paper that had a first-class account of the Schneider robbery. It is at the head and proposes to stay there." The Democrat had excellent coverage of all aspects of this dastardly crime from its beginnings to the end of the trial in April of the next year.

Harry Minard was arrested on October 12 in the evening, Thomas Piggott was arrested the next morning, October 13. David Reeder was also arrested, as was Frank Grether that same morning. All four were placed on \$5,000 bail. The trial was set for them on October 18. Piggott placed the blame on James Besterfeldt for the blows which Schneider received. Besterfeldt was taken to Elsay for a preliminary examination, but after Judge Kirkpatrick heard the evidence, he released Besterfeldt. The next year, Besterfeldt was injured very seriously in an accident in a cave on the Ames' farm, and so was not present to testify again when the trial was held in April, 1888.

The April 5, 1888 issue of the Jersey County Democrat carried "a synopsis of the testimony, as a full account

would take the whole paper." Almost everyone in Elsay had something to say about where they were, or who they saw, so the testimonies occupied a good part of the issue as it was.

The October 6, 1887 issue reported the crime as follows:

Thursday night about half past seven Mr. S. went to the mill and was paid \$354.50. He had in his pocket at the time \$105. He did not return home at once as he is an Odd Fellow and the Lodge of Rebecca met that night, and being a member he attended.¹ About 10 o'clock he started home accompanied by some of the members of the lodge, among them Mr. John Reintges. The latter left him but a short distance from home and this is the last seen of him till he staggered into his home bleeding profusely from two wounds in the head: He had been struck with some blunt instrument and the cheek bone on the left side was broken so that blood poured from his nose and mouth every time he tried to speak. Another blow on the top of the head had loosened his scalp and torn a great hole in it . . .² The robbery was committed doubtless by persons acquainted with the place for they knew the route Mr. Schneider would take and had cut off some limbs from a tree under which he would pass that the murderer could get a better chance to strike him, the assassin standing over the fence and reaching his arm across the walk.

Lewis B. Hayes was a detective from Springfield, Illinois. He arrived on October 8 and was introduced as a cousin of Prof. R.B. Leak. He soon became a general favorite with the "boys" and it was safe to say was not suspected as being anything but "Bob's Cousin." He was however, at work and being helped by a committee of citizens who scarcely slept for a week. C.W. Page, chief of the Central Detective Agency, arrived on the following Tuesday and gleaned what facts he could in regard to the case.

Mr. Schneider recovered enough to talk on October 11, and

stated that a moment before he was struck, he met a man on the sidewalk and recognized him. He gave his name and his position as to the man. Detectives Page and Hayes continued to work; Hayes privately and Page openly, and on Wednesday evening Lewis Hayes with Deputy Sheriff Chas. Smith went to Clifton, secured the service of a man and skiff, crossed to Dressers' Island and Hayes there took into custody Harry Minard and after getting him into Ill-

inois arrested him. Judge S.B. Foree tendered his services in this matter and without his aid this arrest could not have been made without considerable difficulty. On Wednesday morning³ Detectives Page and Hayes arrested Thomas Piggott, also Frank Grether with evidence found on both parties. David Reeder who lives up the river, about a quarter of a mile from Elsay, was also arrested in the evening by Hayes.

The warrant which Lewis Hayes had for the arrest of the "party or parties" responsible for the crime included "\$5 per day and expenses if we did not succeed in convicting; if we did convict was to get \$300; have got some of it and expect to get the rest as soon as the trial is over."

Widely varying were the testimonies of Schneider, Piggott and Minard. According to Schneider, he had left his house about 7 p.m. on the night of September 29, 1887, and was on his way to get paid for some barrels he had made for Doran's Mill. He was carrying about \$105 before he went, and after being paid, the sum was around \$461.65. He went on to a lodge meeting at 8 p.m., and when that was over, he stopped by Cosmos Keller's saloon on LaSalle Street. Sometime between 9 and 10 p.m., he, Mr. Vanderslice, Mr. Stephany, and Mr. Reintges left to go home. Stephany and Vanderslice left Schneider and Reintges and went their own way. Schneider and Reintges walked on towards Reintges' home, which was opposite the schoolhouse on upper Mill Street. Reintges turned to go into his house. Schneider walked on, and when he approached lot 4, he saw a man standing at his left. The man was about 5'8" or 9", had a moustache and was unshaven. He struck Schneider, leaving Schneider's mind blank for about two months.⁴ Whether the crime was planned or whether it was a whim on the part of these men is unanswered.

Piggott's testimony, which eventually convicted both him and Minard, was convincing and was corroborated by what most of the townspeople saw and heard. According to the *Jersey County Democrat* account of the trial, Piggott "saw Minard on the 28th of last September; started up town in Elsay; met Harry Minard, went up town together; he said 'let's rob somebody, asked if I would help him and Jim Besterfeldt rob Schneider; I said I would: he said Jim Besterfeldt says opposite Werd's was the best place to rob him, because it was dark there.' The next day he worked on the railroad; about 7:30 p.m. he and Minard went over to Giberson's store on the corner of LaSalle and Palm Streets. Soon Besterfeldt came along and he "asked if we saw Schneider: said we must get something to hit him with: Harry and I went to the levee; got a pick handle out of the box and started up town; got it out of the railroad tool-box: went up town to Keller's saloon." Besterfeldt went in to the saloon; Piggott and Minard walked on, passed Josephine Huss, talked to Willis Brock and hid the pick handle under the wooden sidewalk. After some time had passed, Brock told Piggott and Minard to take a dispatch to Mrs. Ames, which they did. After they returned they "got the pick handle and went up

An innocent bystander to the planning of the crime, Willis Brock asked Piggott and Minard to take a message to Mrs. Ames. Here he is shown with his wife, Zena Calkins Brock, and two of their children. This picture comes to us from Mr. Byron Brock, of Vallejo, California, a member of HEF.



the back way: got to the school house: Harry said, 'you stay at school house steps, Jim is to hit him, and you set the pick handle in the corner of the fence and I am to rob him.'"

Gus Reed walked by about 9:15 and the three men dispersed; Piggott crossed to the spring, Minard turned away, the three men met later at Giberson's store, and they looked in the saloon about 9:40 p.m. "Saw Schneider, Reintges, and Vanderslice: waited till they came out and followed them. Vanderslice went into the post-office and Reintges and Schneider turned towards home: I crossed to the school house, heard Reintges say 'good-night' had not gone far till I heard two licks struck, Jim Besterfeldt and Harry Minard came down: Jim had the pick handle and Harry had two pocket-books; he gave them to me: I took them: Besterfeldt told me to take the pick handle: I put it under some boards and threw the pocket-books away: went home and looked at the clock, it was 20 minutes past ten: put the money in the trunk: went to work next day: told Harry how much money there was, \$461.65; Harry said 'don't let any one see it'; hid the pick handle, saw Jim Besterfeldt that evening; told him how much money there was; he said 'that is about

\$354 apiece, keep it till everything quiets down." Two weeks later, Piggott and Minard were arrested. Piggott "confessed to Mr. O Netto: he said they had found the money in my trunk and for me to tell the whole story: I said Jim Besterfeldt, Harry Minard and I did it: he asked if David Reeder was in it and I said no." When Piggott was cross-examined, he said he did not remember what kind of boots or hat Besterfeldt wore, but that Minard was wearing an old, slouch white hat. Piggott didn't give any money to Besterfeldt or Minard--neither of them ever asked for any.

Frank Grether who was arrested at the same time as Piggott said he knew "Piggott and Minard, saw them often together: went to Grafton with Minard and Piggott: I had no money; Piggott gave me 25 cents: he got a \$5 bill changed: heard Piggott say he wished the train was going to Kansas City: Piggott said I need not be afraid to come back to Elsay as I would not be arrested."

David Reeder who was also implicated in the trial testified as follows:

Live in Elsay: know Gus Reed: talked with him in Elsay a few days after the robbery: he said he saw two men run from behind the school house, but he did not know who they were: was arrested by Page at my house: it was about the 13th day of October, 1887: took me to Elsay: the next day they took me to Schneider: Schneider identified me as the man who struck him: said he recognized me before he was struck, spoke to me and then I struck him: I denied it: they took me to jail on the 14th of Oct.: talked with Piggott a few days after I got in: Piggott said he was sorry he had implicated Minard and Besterfeldt for they were not in it.

Later in the trial, Piggott was re-cross-examined. His words at that time were:

Did not tell J. Howe (to whom he talked in jail) that Besterfeldt was not guilty while I was in jail; did not tell him that I did not care a damn what became of Besterfeldt, Minard or myself, but I would not tell who the real culprits were for half of Jersey County; did not say the people of Elsay thought there were three in it, and that I would not tell the real ones for half of Jersey county.

"The state here closed its case and the witnesses for the defense were called. Minard was the first one put on the stand. He deported himself well, and it was owing to which side of the case the spectators leaned that they thought him mean-looking or honest."

Minard's testimony denied, almost point by point, everything which Piggott had said. Minard said he worked on the Ames' farm September 28, 1887, went home about 6 p.m. and was in the house all evening. He didn't go downtown, never talked to Piggott about robbery of Schneider. He again worked on the Ames' farm the next day, September 29. He ate supper at home, then went down town to the post office. He met Piggott there and they walked together down to the river. Willis Brock

told Minard and Piggott about the dispatch and they took it to Mrs. Ames at Notchcliff. Besterfeldt then met up with Minard and they walked to the Wards' house, because Besterfeldt wanted Minard to work for him there the next day. Besterfeldt went in to the Wards' house; Minard spoke to Mrs. Slover while he waited. Besterfeldt came out of the house, and he and Minard continued down town; they passed Mary Leak, Rosa Stroud and her mother. They saw Piggott at McDow's saloon; Besterfeldt went in the saloon. After various other activities, Minard went home, up to his mother's room, then went to bed about 9:10 p.m. He said he had no hat on. He said he didn't know of Piggott hiding a club, he never wanted to rob Schneider, never was with Besterfeldt, never hid a pick handle for Besterfeldt to find. After all this, he felt it necessary to say that all the statements Piggott had made about him were false. He continued that he was not near where Schneider was hurt, never talked to Piggott about Schneider's money. He went across the river in a skiff a few days later to pick apples and stayed because he got a job shucking corn. It was here that he was arrested. Lewis Hayes read a warrant for his arrest to him, and so he went with Hayes to Clifton. They all had wine there, but Minard had about twice as much as any one else. He talked with Hayes about the robbery but denied that he had said he would rather save himself than go to the pen. He said that Piggott had said one night in jail -- "wonder what they are going to arrest Besterfeldt for, he don't know anything about this case."

Mrs. Lawless, Minard's mother, refuted Piggott's testimony with her own: "my son was at home at nine o'clock . . . Harry came in, took his coat, shoes, and cap off: . . . heard the clock strike nine after Harry had gone to bed: know he was in bed from nine to eleven, for his clothes were in my room."

Although there were many other testimonies given, these were the most important ones. Besterfeldt, through what the Elsay people considered an "act of God," was struck down in an accident in a cave, and so never had the chance to testify. Both Piggott's and Minard's testimonies are plausible, but other evidence seems to support in my view what Piggott said. The Jersey County Democrat disagrees with me on that point; in their November 10, 1887 issue, they write:

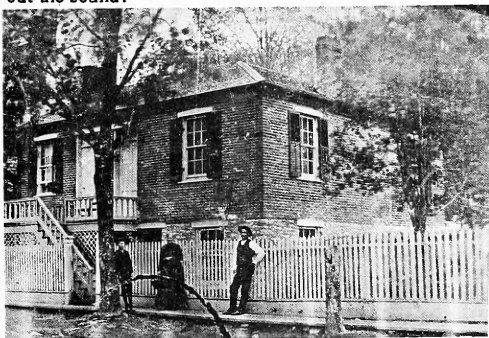
As stated in the Democrat Oct. 20, we believe Piggott the guilty man, the one who concocted the scheme, struck the cowardly blow, robbed his unconscious victim, and Minard perhaps acted as a tool to watch, for they were together spending the money at Grafton, and that looks bad for Minard. While in St. Louis last week we visited our old friend, Hugh O'Neil, Chief of Detectives of that city; he said, 'Piggott is the guilty man, Besterfeldt is innocent and was rung in by Piggott because he thought Schieder (sic.) might die. In all my experience I seldom found a man to strike a blow like that, intending to kill his victim, and let some one

else take the money for which the deed was done. The man who kept the money struck the blow.

Schneider's testimony and others from the townspeople of Elsay fit in quite nicely with what Piggott declared to be the truth. Most all think there was more than one man involved, be it two or three altogether. How much the other man or men were involved is hard to determine.

As the trial progressed, some small pieces of evidence were turned up. A boot print, a hat, and a peculiar way of leaning on a fence were, in the end, along with Piggott's testimony, what convicted Piggott and Minard to ten years in the penitentiary.

Various people, in their testimonies, presented different kinds of evidence which are important to the understanding of the case. Mrs. Theresa Huss, for example, lived in the brick house on Mill Street across from the school, now the house of Mrs. Virginia Anderson. Her testimony was in German and had to be translated. She heard the blows as the men hit Schneider. She saw two men go towards the school house when she looked out of her shutters around 10 o'clock. She thought she heard a cry for help, but at that moment the train came through and whistled, thereby effectively drowning out the sound.



The attack on Schneider occurred close enough to the Huss house so that Mrs. Huss heard the commotion. Here she is standing in front of her house on Mill Street, now the home of Mrs. Virginia Anderson.

Elsah townspeople who saw Piggott and Minard that night saw them together, but it is here that the stories differ. At this most crucial point, Minard either went home to bed or helped Piggott and perhaps Besterfeldt to rob Schneider. Dr. B.F. Farley of Elsay said several times in his testimony that Besterfeldt and Reeder are often mistaken for each other from a distance, but never when seen at fairly close quarters (10 feet or less.) Xavier Schneider positively identified Reeder as the man who struck him, not two men. If Piggott was waiting at the school house steps as he said he was, then Besterfeldt and Minard should have been visible to Schneider. The Jersey County Democrat of October 27, 1887 said, "There is no evidence against Reeder, except that

of Mr. Schneider, who is positive he recognized him the moment before the assault. The people here generally think he must have been mistaken. . . The confession made by Piggott is not credited by a majority of our citizens, but we feel confident time will develop the facts. It does not seem probable that two people would commit what they must have intended for a murder and then hand the money over to a third party."

Although this last point is one well taken, it solves nothing. Even if Piggott did organize the robbery instead of Besterfeldt, then we are still not sure just who his accomplices were. When David Reeder testified on April 5, 1888, he said he talked to Piggott while they were in jail, and "Piggott said he was sorry he had implicated Minard and Besterfeldt for they were not in it." To further back this point, J. Howe testified,

Talked with Piggott in jail: he said he did not give a damn and said that the Elsay people believed there were three in it and he would not turn up the other two for the whole of Jersey county, so laid it onto Minard and Besterfeldt. On cross examination Howe refused to answer whether he had ever been in the Missouri penitentiary or not and the judge commanded him to answer, he still refused and was excused, the Judge saying it would do no good to punish him as he was already in jail, and sentenced to two years in the penitentiary. This episode was quite amusing to the crowd.

So far, all the evidence presented has been that of a circumstantial nature; nothing really positive that would make a person say, "Ah ha! There's the key to the crime!" No evidence of that nature was ever found, except the money in Piggott's trunk. Besides this, the one piece of evidence which was more important was the print of a boot. Because the ground was wet, whoever tried to hit Schneider slipped in the process. The track was found the next morning, was measured and used as evidence against Besterfeldt in the trial. Although many townspeople examined the print and considered it a very good piece of evidence, unfortunately some of them could not remember if Besterfeldt was wearing boots when they saw him on the night of September 29. W. Mathews saw him and said he thought Besterfeldt was wearing shoes; L. Vanderslice who testified immediately after Mathews said, "cannot tell positively whether he (Besterfeldt) had on boots or shoes, think he had on boots." C. Keller said he was certain Besterfeldt had boots on, "for I was afraid he would hit the pool table by swinging his feet." This is the one person who said that he knew Besterfeldt was wearing boots; since Keller was in all likelihood worried that his pool table would be damaged by Besterfeldt's boots, and none of the others had any reason to look at his feet, we can assume that Besterfeldt was indeed likely wearing boots that night. As for the print which was found, there were varying opinions.

John Marshaw said he "examined the ground around there (the place of the robbery) the next morning: saw Besterfeldt and Minard there: Besterfeldt had on shoes: examined the foot prints in the wet ground: Besterfeldt's shoes were run over: did not measure the tracks: Min-

ard stands with his arms over a fence, saw Besterfeldt the day after the robbery: he had on boots." R.H. McNair, after examining the track and Besterfeldt's shoes, said that the two could match, he didn't know if it was a boot or a shoe which made the track, but he supposed an old boot could have made such a track. Michael Huss who was a shoemaker in Elsay said he "soled a pair of shoes for Besterfeldt . . . do not know if the shoes at the examination were the ones fixed for Besterfeldt."

Another small bit of evidence found was the hat that Minard wore -- an old, slouch white hat. Several people mentioned too, the way that Minard had of leaning on fences. Many of those who testified saw someone leaning on the fence, wearing a white, slouch hat, at the scene of the crime. W.E. Brown said, "Minard leans up against a fence or anything with his arms thrown back and on the fence." P.G. Giberson testified: "know the position Minard loafs in: leans back on a fence with arms on it and swings his shoulders when walking . . . Minard loafs around more than anyone else, holds his head down." Mrs. Slover said, "I got to the place where Schneider was hit, saw a man leaning against the fence: I said 'good evening sir' he said 'good evening mam: ' he was on the sidewalk and looked about the height of myself; was dressed in dark clothes . . . wore a slouch hat." On these pieces of evidence the testimonies ended.

Judge Goodrich opened the argument for the state. He spoke nearly an hour and he was followed by Judge Henderson for the defense who spoke for two hours. State Attorney Pogue closed for the state, with a speech of an hour and a half. All the speeches were good. The jury retired about four o'clock and on the first ballot stood ten for conviction and two for acquittal. In about an hour all agreed on conviction, and they balloted for time. Here they differed again, the time ranging from 1 year to 25 years in the penitentiary. Another hour spent at this they agreed to 10 years in the penitentiary and returned a verdict to that effect. When Minard heard it he said he was innocent, and afterwards when urged to confess, said he had told his story and would stay by it. He did not seem to care much for the sentence. It is hoped he will confess and tell the whole thing, and if Besterfeldt is guilty say so, and if innocent, so state.

Several questions remain unanswered today. Obviously Piggott was involved in the crime -- they found the money in his trunk and he confessed to the crime. But was he the one who conceived the idea? If others were involved, why didn't they ask for their share of the money? Was it to convict Piggott alone for the crime which all shared? Were there accomplices at all? Xavier Schneider saw only one man before he was struck.

From the evidence given us by the Jersey County Democrat, these questions are ones that can't be an-

swered to the fullest extent. The jury that convicted Piggott and Minard apparently had a good reason for doing so; this isn't wholly apparent from the synopsis of the trial. Only the essentials of the testimony were printed; this of course does not include the emotion involved, the feelings of the townspeople, the standing of the defendants in the community, the local prestige of the victim, and the unprecedented nature of the crime in Elsay.

At any rate, this stone dropped in the pool of Jersey County made enough splash to generate much information about Elsay in 1887, and the ripples must have radiated for some time. Indeed, this brief account made is the last and farthest from the source.

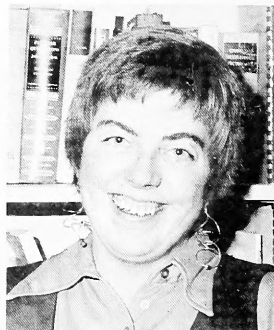
¹According to the records of the I.O.O.F. lodge 269 of Elsay, there was no meeting that evening. The lodge met once weekly; there was a meeting on September 24 and on October 1, but not on September 29, 1887.

²On September 30, Dr. C. Duhadway of Jerseyville called on Schneider, whose "nose was broken, the upper jaw fractured and the roof of his mouth was crushed: think the wound on his head was made with a blunt instrument: the others were made with something sharper: should think these wounds could have been made with a pick handle." If all the blows had been done with a pick handle, he said, they probably would have fractured his skull and killed him.

³This is a mistake in the account. Piggott and Grether were arrested the morning after Minard, so that would have been Thursday morning.

⁴This is a slight exaggeration on Schneider's part. In both the records of the Elsay town meetings and I.O.O.F. meetings, Schneider was reported present only a little more than a month after the assault took place.

this issue's author



Leslie Yelland graduated from Principia College last June and is currently on their staff. She did the work for this paper while still a student, even typing up the final copy. For several years one of the most enthusiastic student members of HEF, Leslie has made a number of contributions to Elsay research.



The Xavier Schneider house on upper Mill Street, until recently the home of Mrs. Edith Lazenby, has always been one of the prettiest and best kept homes in Elsah. It has the longest remaining picket fence in Elsah and its thick stone walls afford space for very wide windowsills in the livingroom.

Added to by Dr. Lyons, formerly a

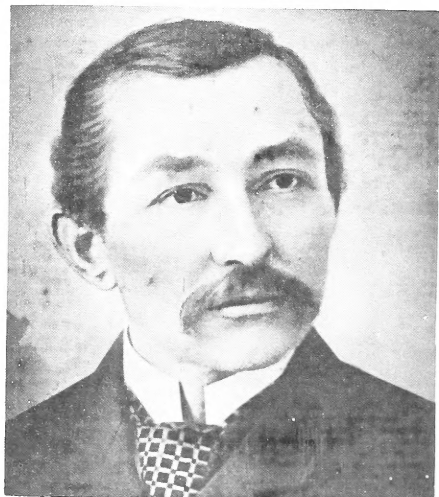
chemistry professor at Principia College, and later further improved by Mrs. Lazenby, this home represents a fine village preservation and adaptation. Its garage is new, the former one having been crushed by a very large white oak which fell on it during a heavy windstorm last spring. Mr. Schneider ran his cooperage business behind his house.

The Schneider Obituary

Last December Tim Solomon found Xavier Schneider's obituary in the Jersey County Democrat for August 10, 1905 (p. 10). It is not entirely accurate, but does apparently indicate the lasting effects of the attack made on him. The text is as follows:

Xavier Schnieder, (sic.) for fifty years a resident of this county, died at his home in Elsah Sunday morning, August 6th, at the age of 73 years, after long illness of paralytists. Sixteen years ago as Mr Schneider was on his way home from Alton he was seized by two highwaymen, robbed of \$450, beaten over the head, the effects of which after many years caused his death. Thos. Piggott and Henry Minard were arrested on the charge of being the highwaymen and sentenced to ten years in the penitentiary. He is survived by his wife and one daughter.

The funeral was held at their residence Tuesday afternoon, Rev. Albrecht officiating.



John Reintges, the last companion to leave Schneider before the attack, lived in the house next to the Elsah Post Office, now the home of Mr. and Mrs. Howard Snyder.

ville Democrat (now managed by his descendants). Permission to reprint was obtained from Mr. Henry McAdams, of Alton.

House Tour

HEF is planning its regular annual house tour on Mother's Day in the afternoon. Details will be announced later. Y'all come.

news notes

We regret to note the passing of Mr. Albert Spatz of Jerseyville on February 12th. Son of the late Mr. and Mrs. Philip Spatz, who immigrated to this area from Germany, Mr. Spatz was born August 1, 1884, in Portage des Sioux, Missouri. He ran a grocery store in Elsah for over thirty years in the building on LaSalle Street that now houses the Elsah Country Store. Later he operated a store in Grafton. During his stay in Elsah he served as town clerk and was school treasurer for over thirty-five years.

On March 19th, during the Illinois primaries, Elsah was divided into two precincts for the first time in its history. Voting for the village and the township took place in the Civic Center.

A twenty-minute film of the flood at Elsah has now been completed. The flood pictures were taken by Paul Williams, and the work of adding comparative footage and editing done by John Williams and Mary Lynn Cumings. HEF is planning a local showing in the near future.

CONTRIBUTION: We are very grateful for a contribution of \$70 to HEF from Polly Harmon of Los Angeles, California.

McAdams Republished: The Alton Museum of History and Art has recently republished Records of Ancient Races, by William McAdams. Originally appearing in 1887, this 120 page book is an important early contribution to the archeological knowledge of this area. It is well illustrated with line drawings and for its time extremely knowledgeable.

McAdams was a frequent visitor to Elsah, especially in the duck-hunting season, and many of his witticisms were quoted in the Elsah columns of the Jersey-

ARCHAEOLOGY AT CAHOKIA: The entire July-August issue of The Living Museum last year was devoted to the Indian remains at Cahokia Mounds State Park, and related matters. We are very fortunate to have such a pre-eminent complex of archaeological treasures within easy reach by car, and members who have not visited the park will be fascinated by what they find there. The Living Museum is a twelve page magazine published by the Illinois State Museum bi-monthly. They will send it without charge to Illinoisans requesting it. Requests for subscriptions should be sent to The Living Museum, The Illinois State Museum, Springfield, IL 62706.

Elsah's first railroad, the Shoo Fly, ran up through the valley to Dow. Since its main purpose was carrying rock from the Grafton quarry, passengers from Elsah had to ride in the caboose. Finally, the Wabash Railroad put on a passenger coach, and, recalling the recent experiences in the caboose, Orphan Boy, Elsah's correspondent to the Jersey County Democrat, waxed eloquent in the issue of July 5, 1883, with his "Ode to a Caboose":

Many a time we've rode in you,
And swore until the air was blue.
We watched the passengers hop about,
Curse and swear and loudly shout,
And wish the Wabash system dead.

Can the present troubles in the country's railway system be traced to such hot language from Elsah?

The temperance question was a hot issue in Elsah in the 1880's before the town, in 1893, voted in its own prohibition law. But in 1883 one could not buy liquor on Sundays, and our rural versifier, Orphan Boy, offered this comment to the August 16 issue of the Democrat:

Of Sundays', not a wince can you buy,
Not a beer can you get,
And to the average Elsahite
It is a dry day, you bet,
But to some it don't worry,
And they get just as tight,
They simply lay in
A supply Saturday night.